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From: Enck, Judith
Sent: Fri 9/2/2016 2:33:56 PM
Subject: Region 2 Pfoa Clips

Subject: POFA/PFOS Clips

Senator: Subpoena Hoosick Falls polluters for water hearings

by Matthew Hamilton

on September 2, 2016 at 10:07 AM

Times Union

State Sen. Brad Hoylman, D-Manhattan, has called on two Republican colleagues to subpoena companies that have been identified as likely polluters of Rensselaer County water supplies in an effort to force them to testify at upcoming legislative water quality hearings.

In a Thursday letter to Senate Health Committee Chairman Kemp Hannon, R-Long Island, and Environmental Conservation Committee Chairman Tom O'Mara, R-Chemung County, Hoylman urged both men to exercise subpoena power to compel Saint-Gobain North America, Taconic Plastics and Honeywell International to appear at the next round of hearings after they did not appear at a Tuesday hearing in Hoosick Falls.

"The public deserves a full accounting of the cause and scope of the pollution these companies inflicted, and we as lawmakers should be using these hearings as an opportunity to get all of the facts of these cases into the public record," Hoylman wrote. "Continued failure to do so would be a massive affront to our constituents."

In a statement on Friday, Hoylman called it "an insult to the people of the beleaguered community and all New Yorkers" that those companies did not testify on Tuesday.

Citizens organization Upstate Water Group in a letter to Republican Sen. Kathy Marchione of Halfmoon, who represents the Hoosick Falls area, also called for subpoenas to be issued.

The Senate Republican Majority has not indicated subpoenas are going to start flying soon.

“A subpoena is never the first step, it’s a last resort,” Senate GOP spokesman Scott Reif said Tuesday. “There are two additional hearings where we will also be soliciting testimony and seeking answers about water contamination and water quality issues. We are hopeful that all of the parties will work with us to mitigate future incidents and prevent this situation from happening again.”

Hannon pointed to ongoing lawsuits that may make the companies’ appearance moot anyway.

EPA Fires Back at State Amid PFOA Criticism

By Katie Eastman

Updated Thursday, September 1, 2016 at 05:32 PM EDT

TWC News - Albany

The Environmental Protection Agency is taking issue with claims the state was confused by its guidelines, according to a letter issued Thursday to the state departments of Health and Environmental Conservation, amid criticism heaped on the EPA for its role in identifying PFOA contamination in Hoosick Falls.

No one from the EPA attended Tuesday's Senate water quality hearing, but the agency was brought up many times.

"We're calling on the EPA to reimburse the state for any costs that the state is not able to

recoup from the polluters," said Department of Health Commissioner Howard Zucker.

In the letter by EPA administrator Gina McCarthy, she says she was "surprised to see the demand" that her agency pay for cleanup of the contamination.

The state has already spent \$25 million and expects to spend \$50 million more. The DEC has identified Saint Gobain and Honeywell as the sources of the contamination in Hoosick Falls.

DOH has previously said the EPA changed its guidance on what's considered safe levels of PFOA in drinking water too many times. Commissioner Zucker and DEC Commissioner Basil Saggos wrote in a letter to the EPA that "their arbitrary guidance levels caused confusion."

In 2009, the federal government issued an advisory that drinking water in the short-term with contaminants more than 400 parts per trillion could cause health problems. In recent months, the EPA added a lifetime exposure level of 70 parts per trillion.

McCarthy addressed this in the letter and said these advisory levels "complement one another."

She added, "Given these communications and the expertise within your agencies, it's very difficult to understand how there was any confusion in the guidance provided to NYSDOH regarding contamination in Hoosick Falls."

The letter did not, however, address why the EPA changed the short term exposure levels to 100 parts per trillion for just the Hoosick Falls community. The DOH and DEC said this "generated undue public anxiety."

There will be a joint Assembly and Senate water quality hearing on Wednesday, September

7. The EPA says it still does not plan to send a representative.

EPA should have been at Hoosick Falls hearing

September 1, 2016

Daily Gazette

What a great word, declined.

The politician declined to answer questions about the scandal.

"No thank you. I hope you don't mind, but I respectfully decline your invitation to take responsibility for my actions."

The Environmental Protection Agency and officials from St. Gobain, Honeywell and Taconic Plastics declined an invitation to appear before a state Senate hearing Tuesday on PFOA contamination in Hoosick Falls that has sicked dozens of residents.

Hoosick Falls, New York in May 2011.

Hoosick Falls, New York in May 2011.

"No thank you. We decline to appear and answer questions about what we did and didn't do with regards to people being poisoned by a dangerous chemical."

Declined. It's a word that connotes courtesy, but reflects disrespect and abdication of responsibility.

The EPA and the companies that reportedly dumped the chemical are key participants in the pollution problem that's plagued the small Rensselaer County village and others like it around the state.

And they, like the state officials who showed up Tuesday to be grilled by senators, had an obligation to answer questions about their role in the contamination and the accompanying health problems experienced by residents.

Yet they were nowhere to be found at the hearing.

Particularly disappointing was the absence at the hearing of anyone from the EPA, which state officials Tuesday accused of abdicating its responsibility for the contamination and offering conflicting and changing advice to state officials on what constitutes acceptable levels of the chemical in the environment.

It's not enough that EPA Regional Administrator Judith Enck conducted individual phone interviews with reporters afterward in response to what was said at the hearing. Answering a few questions on the phone after the fact is not an adequate substitute for being there in person to face direct questions from lawmakers.

Had Enck or a qualified EPA representative been there in person, they could have countered the state's accusations on the spot, which would have allowed lawmakers to go back to the state officials for their counter-response. They could have explained how the funding mechanism actually works to pay for remediation.

Instead, the state got a free opportunity to run a blame-game that produced no clear answers as to who was responsible for government's handling of the matter.

Also declining to participate in the hearing were representatives of the polluters allegedly

responsible for contaminating the water supply and causing these problems. They weren't there to answer for their conduct.

So really, what did the public gain from Tuesday's hearing that they couldn't have gotten from separate press releases issued by all sides?

With the absence of the EPA and the polluters at this hearing, the citizens are left with nothing but more questions and more frustration.

Two other hearings, jointly hosted by the Assembly and Senate, are scheduled for next Wednesday and the following Monday. If some of the participants again decline the invitation, it's up to legislators to use their power to force them to show up.

Otherwise, why bother holding these hearings at all?

EPA Fires Back at Cuomo Administration Over PFOA Crisis

Albany Times-Union

By: Brendan J. Lyons

September 1, 2016

Gina McCarthy, the administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, on Thursday fired back at New York's commissioners for health and environmental conservation, who earlier this week accused the federal agency of giving "conflicting guidance" about a toxic chemical that polluted multiple water supplies in eastern Rensselaer County.

On Tuesday, the state agencies released a letter in which they cast blame at the EPA for any issues in the state's handling of the crisis, including waiting more than a year to warn residents in the village of Hoosick Falls to stop drinking the PFOA-contaminated water. The state's letter was issued as a Senate hearing began in Hoosick Falls that day in which

legislators called on government officials to explain their responses to the situation.

"I urge you to move beyond accusatory letters and, rather, work cooperatively with EPA Region 2 and the residents of Hoosick Falls on the important work of cleaning up the contamination in the village and protecting the public drinking water supply," McCarthy wrote in a letter sent Thursday to DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos and Health Commissioner Howard A. Zucker.

McCarthy's letter questioned the assertion by Seggos and Zucker that "changing" EPA guidelines on PFOA resulted in "undue public confusion."

The finger-pointing between the state agencies and the EPA has been festering since earlier this year when New York officials came under fire as a result of internal emails and other records indicating they downplayed the significance of any harm to public health from the contaminated water. The EPA, meanwhile, has faced criticism for waiting years to issue an advisory on the potential adverse health effects from long-term exposure to PFOA in drinking water supplies.

PFOA is a toxic chemical used since the 1940s to make industrial and household products. Several manufacturing plants in eastern Rensselaer County and North Bennington, Vt., used the chemical for decades and PFOA has been discovered in wells in those areas. Human health studies have found links between PFOA exposure and six diseases: kidney cancer, testicular cancer, ulcerative colitis, thyroid disease, pregnancy-induced hypertension and high cholesterol.

In December, more than a year after PFOA was discovered at elevated levels in public water supplies in Hoosick Falls, the state Health Department distributed "fact sheets" to village residents at a public meeting that said no adverse health effects were expected from drinking the contaminated water. The EPA's Region 2 administrator, Judith Enck, issued a statement days later urging people not to drink the water or use it for cooking. Enck also criticized Mayor David Borge for saying it was a "personal choice" whether to consume the polluted water.

For years, New York has adhered to a standard that does not raise health alarms unless

unregulated contaminants such as PFOA exceed 50,000 parts per trillion. The state's reliance on that threshold took place even though the EPA in 2009 issued an advisory about the potential health risks of consuming water with more than 400 ppt of PFOA for short periods, which the EPA said meant weeks or months.

In May, the EPA issued a nationwide advisory declaring the maximum level of PFOA in drinking water for lifetime exposure should not exceed 70 ppt.

In Hoosick Falls, tests of the public water supply in 2014 showed levels of PFOA above 600 ppt.

But McCarthy, in her letter to New York's commissioners, said the EPA's 2009 short-term advisory made clear that people should not consume water with more than 400 ppt of PFOA for long periods of time.

"Further contending in your letter, as you do, that EPA contributed to your agencies' confusion by changing the level of the drinking water health advisories for PFOA is ... difficult to understand," McCarthy's letter states. "These health advisories to not conflict with one another, they complement one another."

The state Health Department and EPA both were notified in 2014 that the levels of PFOA in the village's water supply exceeded the levels recommended in the EPA's 2009 short-term exposure advisory. But state and local leaders said the EPA's guideline was not binding or enforceable, only advisory, and that since PFOA was an unregulated contaminant there was no need to warn the public to stop drinking the water. At the same time, state and local officials began exploring filtering options and alternative water supplies for village residents, who were offered free bottled water more than a year after the chemical was discovered in the water.

State health officials and other members of Gov. Andrew Cuomo's administration also have taken the position that studies have only shown an "association" between PFOA exposure and diseases such as kidney cancer and thyroid disease.

Robert A. Bilott, an Ohio attorney who has taken on DuPont for its production of the hazardous chemical that's polluted water supplies across the country, has criticized New York officials for mischaracterizing the findings of the health studies that examined links between PFOA exposure and several life-threatening diseases.

Bilott said a science panel formed as a result of the litigation with DuPont did a comprehensive study of the health effects of exposure to PFOA and issued a report concluding the chemical has a "probable link" to six diseases, including kidney and testicular cancer.

But the attorney also has criticized the EPA for its response to the nation's PFOA contamination of water supplies. In July, after a congressional committee announced it was investigating the handling of the Hoosick Falls water crisis, Bilott urged the federal panel to also examine the EPA's actions on the contaminant, including why it took years for the agency to issue the 70-ppt advisory that was issued in May.

"Although we understand that the developments in Hoosick Falls since 2014 are what triggered the committee's current investigation, EPA's delay in responding to PFOA drinking water contamination issues extends far beyond Hoosick Falls and well beyond the events of the last two years," Bilott wrote in a letter to the congressional panel. "We continued, repeatedly, to press EPA to take appropriate action in this regard as more and more PFOA contamination was discovered between 2001 and 2006 in drinking water supplies in West Virginia, Ohio, Minnesota, and New Jersey, leading to significantly elevated PFOA blood levels in the residents drinking that water."

At least six public water systems in New York, including two in Rensselaer County, have detected PFOA in their supplies in excess of the EPA's new guidance standard.

Bilott said the EPA retreated from investigating PFOA contamination, or setting a national guideline, after it reached an agreement with manufacturers in 2006 that they would phase out their use of the chemical by last year. The EPA's 2006 agreement with DuPont and other manufacturers came a year after DuPont agreed to pay \$10.25 million in civil penalties to settle a complaint brought by the EPA over the company's PFOA pollution in the Midwest.

Churchill: Cuomo team passes the buck in Hoosick Falls

by Chris Churchill

Published 9:19 pm, Wednesday, August 31, 2016

Time Union

State Sen. Kemp Hannon put a beach ball on a tee and handed Howard Zucker a bat. Somehow, the health commissioner swung and missed.

The metaphorical ball arrived as a question served up during Tuesday's hearing on Hoosick Falls water contamination, when Hannon asked Zucker if he would have done anything differently while responding to the crisis.

It was the perfect opportunity for Zucker to concede that his department should never have told villagers the tainted water was safe to drink. It was also a chance for a member of Gov. Andrew Cuomo's administration to make at least a small concession of responsibility.

Zucker did nothing of the sort.

Now, the commissioner is undeniably a brilliant man — so brilliant that he became a doctor at 22, an accomplishment that supposedly inspired the Doogie Howser television series.

But Zucker couldn't come up with a single thing that his department could have done better. Instead, he blathered on about how hard his department had worked and well it had handled the crisis.

It was a remarkable moment, one of those times when you can't believe what you're hearing.

It's true that Zucker's response was predictable to anyone familiar with the Cuomo administration's four-Ds approach to controversy — deflect, delay, deny and, if necessary, defame. But it was still shocking to see it employed in Hoosick Falls, where trust in government has been reduced to PFOA-tainted dust.

Let's review why that's so.

Officials in Aug. 2014 were first made aware of potential perfluorooctanoic-acid contamination in Hoosick Falls. Two months later, tests results confirmed fears and showed the severity of the problem.

Yet for more than a year, the state downplayed the dangers and said the water was safe to drink.

Stunningly, that continued to be the case even after the EPA warned, in Nov. 2015, that nobody in Hoosick Falls should be drinking the water. A state Department of Health "fact sheet" released in December claimed that "health effects are not expected from normal use of the water."

Yet Zucker couldn't think of something he'd do differently?

Not one thing?

Rather than accept responsibility, Zucker instead faulted the EPA for providing what he described as inconsistent and contradictory information. The state relied on federal guidance, he said, because it can't know the dangers posed by every unregulated chemical.

In reality, the EPA in 2009 first advised against drinking water with PFOA concentrations higher than 400 parts per trillion, as was the case in Hoosick Falls. Plus, the dangers of

PFOA were widely known.

Consider that the state Senate panel on Tuesday also heard from attorney Rob Bilott, whose pollution lawsuit against DuPont led to a landmark PFOA health study. It monitored 69,000 West Virginians over the course of seven years and found that even small amounts of the chemical are linked to cancer and other diseases.

"The science is unequivocal," Bilott said during the hearing in the high school gym.

The lawyer's testimony made a fool of Zucker, because it showed that state officials should have known that the toxin wasn't safe to drink. The DuPont study is available online.

So Zucker, in response to Hannon's question, could have rubbed his chin and said, "You know, in retrospect, I wish I'd taken the time to run PFOA through Google. I might have realized just how dangerous it is."

But Zucker didn't say that. He didn't admit to any mistake whatsoever.

Listening to Zucker pass the buck, you'd have thought Hoosick Falls was in Alabama or some other low-tax place where people don't expect much help from state government. But this is high-tax New York, where the government is supposed to be better than that, where officials should never claim that they can only follow federal guidance.

If state officials won't even warn New Yorkers against drinking contaminated water, then what are we paying for? We certainly aren't paying for honesty.

I hadn't heard that Zucker may have been the inspiration for Doogie Howser until somebody mentioned it to me after his testimony. "Doogie Howser, M.D." was a corny show, but I watched it.

If you did too, you may remember that the fictional teenage doctor ended each episode by typing a newly learned moral lesson into his computerized diary. You can find them compiled online.

"The truth is our most valuable commodity," Howser wrote at the conclusion of one show. "It would probably be a way better world if people didn't use it so economically."

Smart kid, that Doogie.

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At Hoosick Falls hearings, Cuomo administration blames EPA

By Scott Waldman

08/30/16 06:16 PM EDT

Politico

HOOSICK FALLS — At the first of three hearings into the Hoosick Falls water pollution crisis on Tuesday, the message from Gov. Andrew Cuomo's administration was clear: the federal Environmental Protection Agency was at fault.

The hearing, called by the Republican-controlled state Senate, was packed with angry mothers chiding bureaucrats, spokespeople from at least three branches of the Cuomo administration, a phalanx of television cameras and an activist in a bright blue wig and matching tight shorts calling himself SuperWaterMan.

three hours, commissioners for the state departments of health and environmental conservation repeatedly cycled back to what they said were the EPA's failures to provide

clear guidance on how to address pollution caused by PFOA, a chemical found in the village's water supply.

Health commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker accused the EPA of sowing confusion and unnecessarily causing anxiety among vulnerable residents. The health and environmental conservation commissioners have sent a letter to the EPA, requesting compensation for what they described as its mishandling of the Hoosick Falls response.

Zucker said the EPA, which did not send a representative to the hearing, has issued a series of recommended safety levels of PFOA contamination in the last year that has made it hard for state officials to respond properly.

“What we could use is a little less confusion from the EPA,” he said.

In an interview with POLITICO New York on Tuesday, EPA Region 2 administrator Judith Enck said the Cuomo administration was actually not confused by the recommended PFOA consumption limits, which had been 400 parts per trillion for years. The levels were lowered to 100 parts per trillion and then to 70 parts per trillion. At the time Cuomo administration officials were assuring residents their water was safe, the municipal water supply had already tested at 600 parts per trillion.

“The EPA had numerous discussions with the state of New York,” Enck said in an interview with POLITICO New York. “They were not confused, they disagreed. The reason they told EPA at the time was they felt like our 400 number had a large margin of safety and therefore they did not rely on that as the number to follow.”

Enck said she was concerned that the state's letter to the EPA meant it would not seek full compensation for the pollution mitigation from the polluters. She said the companies that released PFOA into the environment should pay for its cleanup, not taxpayers.

At the hearing, state Sen. Kemp Hannon, a Republican from Long Island and chair of the chamber's health committee, blasted the health department for distributing a widely

criticized fact sheet to Hoosick Falls residents in December, assuring them that “normal use” of their water would not be harmful. The sheet was distributed even though the EPA warned the state that the water in Hoosick Falls could be dangerous, as POLITICO New York previously reported.

“This is an example, I think, of what has led to the folks in this community being so disturbed, because during that year I think the advice was unclear,” Hannon said. “You can claim any number of conclusions from out of that letter, it was not as definitive as it ought to have been.”

The Cuomo administration did not acknowledge any missteps in its handling of the crisis. Instead, administration officials pointed to the installation of hundreds of private water treatment systems, extensive blood testing and the ongoing study of cancer rates. When Hannon asked Zucker if there was anything he would do differently, he praised the work of his colleagues.

“We worked extremely hard on this, and I am extremely proud of the team on this ... What I see when I look back at this is we have a dedicated team of experts,” he said.

Hundreds of people in Hoosick Falls have elevated levels of PFOA in their bloodstream. The chemical was used in local factories manufacturing non-stick goods and was found at high levels in the municipal water supply almost two years ago.

Very little of the hearing was spent on the actions of the companies that released the toxic chemical into the water supply. The committee did not use its legal power to force the companies — St. Gobain, Honeywell and Taconic Plastics — to attend. However, a representative from SKDKnickerbocker, the powerful consulting firm hired by St. Gobain in the wake of the scandal, was in the audience.

Among those who testified was Michael Hickey, a Hoosick Falls resident who first discovered the presence of PFOA in the water by conducting his own tests. Choking back tears, he noted that his father worked two jobs, one as a school bus driver and one in the factory linked to the pollution, to support his family before succumbing to cancer. He said his father would have wanted stronger protections for the children on his bus as an outcome

of the hearings.

He said multiple layers of government failed in their response to the crisis.

“It shouldn’t have been so hard for us to battle through the multiple levels of red tape that we had to get through from the village to the town to the county to the state to the federal EPA,” he said.

Dr. Marcus Martinez, a village doctor fought to have local elected leaders recognize the threat posed by PFOA, said residents feel misled. He said the panel should investigate the conversations that occurred between the polluters and local and state officials in the months before the release of the fact sheets assuring residents their water was safe.

“I do believe our citizens were advised incorrectly to consume water that was unsafe for at least for 12 months,” he said.

Hoylman Wants to Subpoena Companies Linked to Hoosick Falls Pollution

Politico

By: Scott Waldman

September 1, 2016

ALBANY — State Sen. Brad Hoylman wants his colleagues to use their subpoena power to force the companies that have been linked to the water pollution crisis in Hoosick Falls to testify at next week’s joint legislative hearing.

Neither company — St. Gobain nor Honeywell — had representatives at Tuesday's initial hearing at Hoosick Falls High School. Hoylman said that prevented lawmakers from pressing company officials about what they knew of PFOA, the chemical found in the village's water supply and in the bloodstreams of many residents.

“We deserve to have the information in the public record and that information is necessary to fully inform our response as legislators to determine steps forward,” Hoylman, a Democrat from Manhattan, said Thursday. “How are we going to have a legislative response to this water crisis without getting information from the parties responsible.”

According to a Honeywell spokeswoman, lawmakers did not invite company officials to participate in Tuesday's Senate hearing.

“To the best of our knowledge, we did not receive a request to testify at the state Senate hearing,” the spokeswoman, Victoria Streitfeld, said. “We remain responsive and cooperative and committed to addressing environmental conditions in the community.”

A spokesman for Republican Sen. Kathy Marchione, who represents Hoosick Falls and chaired Tuesday's hearing, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Dina Pokedoff, a St. Gobain spokeswoman, acknowledged the company was invited but was "unable" to send a representative.

"We will continue to work with local, state and federal officials as much as possible so that the residents of Hoosick Falls can continue to access clean drinking water," she said.

A representative from SKDKnickerbocker, which St. Gobain hired in the wake of the crisis, sat in the audience for much of Tuesday's hearing.

Still, Hoylman has sent a letter to Sen. Tom O'Mara, chairman of the chamber's environmental conservation committee chair, and Sen. Kemp Hannon of Long Island, the co-chair, encouraging them to use the committee's subpoena power.

Hannon has previously said he doesn't want to use subpoena power because it could complicate the hearings. In an interview Wednesday on The Capitol Pressroom with Susan Arbetter, he said lawsuits filed against the companies mean they would fight back against a subpoena in court.

"The difficulty of a subpoena is it can simply result in standoffs from one side to the other," he said.

During Tuesday's hearing, Marchione said she wanted to hear from the companies, but focused much of her criticism on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for not attending.

Much of Tuesday's hearing centered on deflecting blame for the pollution crisis. Much less attention was devoted to the companies linked to the pollution.

The next hearing, a joint session with member of both the Senate and Assembly, is scheduled for Wednesday, in Albany.\

NY Senate holds water hearings in Hoosick Falls

By Edward Damon

Posted: 08/30/2016 10:23:42 PM EDT

Bennington Banner (Vermont)

HOOSICK FALLS, NY >> A hearing by a state Senate panel that collected testimony and examined the water crisis on Tuesday lasted nearly 10 hours.

Senators questioned what specific steps environmental and health agencies took after PFOA was found in local water supplies.

State officials defended their actions, praised their staff, and criticized the federal government for its "shifting" and "confusing" guidance. The state's environmental and health agencies issued a joint statement Tuesday morning, demanding the Environmental Protection Agency reimburse the state for costs that polluters don't pay.

But numerous individuals who testified had a simple question: Why were residents allowed to drink the water for a year or longer after people in charge learned it had a chemical that several years before, had been linked to cancers and other diseases?

"It wasn't an amazing discovery, what we found here," said Michael Hickey, a resident who is credited with sounding the alarm in 2014. Hickey and others testified that the information from an independent science panel was easily accessible. "It was a five-minute Google search."

The state Department of Health knew there were "unanswered questions" when the man-made chemical was found in drinking water in 2014, said state Sen. Thomas O'Mara (R, C, IP-58th District). "I don't understand, short of a no-drink order, why there wasn't a warning sent out that said 'We don't know what these levels mean.'"

O'Mara, chair of the Senate's environmental committee, and state Sen. Kemp Hannon, who represents the 6th District and chairs the health committee, pointed to inconsistencies in a fact sheet DOH issued in December that states, in part: "We [DOH] do not expect health effects to occur from normal use of the water."

"It was not as definitive as what it could have been," Hannon said.

Information from the EPA led to confusion, DOH Commissioner Howard Zucker said. A no-drink order for Hoosick Falls, which EPA Region II Director Judith Enck issued in late 2015, represented "a dramatic change in approach and policy... Everything was moving forward and suddenly, there was a shift that caused confusion," Zucker said.

But Enck disagrees with that categorization.

"There was no confusion," she told the Banner via conference call. But she said there was a disagreement between the state and the EPA, on whether or not residents should stop drinking the water.

Dozens of people gathered in the Hoosick Falls Central School on Tuesday for Senate hearings that delved into the water contamination from PFOA, or perfluorooctanoic acid. The man-made chemical was used for decades when making Teflon products like tapes, foams, coated glass and wire insulation. In Rensselaer County, it's been found in public and private water supplies in: Hoosick and Hoosick Falls; Petersburg; and Berlin. And in a new development, the DEC on Monday declared former municipal landfills in Berlin, Hoosick Falls and Petersburg, as potential Superfund sites after high levels were found.

The panel of seven senators collected testimony from 17 people who registered, a collection of state and county health and environmental officials, officials from affected municipalities, residents, a scientist, and Robert Bilott, an attorney who represented residents in lawsuits against DuPont.

Multiple senators said they regretted that EPA representatives did not attend. Also absent were representatives from Saint-Gobain and Honeywell International, the companies being ordered to clean up contamination in Hoosick, and Taconic Plastics, blamed for PFOA in Petersburg and Berlin. EPA and Saint-Gobain did submit testimony.

The companies agreed to pay for water filters on private wells and on municipal systems; state and private contractors installed them. But residents testified they don't trust the government, the companies, and the water coming from their faucets.

"No one in my house drinks the water. Not even the dog," said Michele Baker, whose home in Hoosick Falls is served by a well. She said the water has only been tested once and she is worried that PFOA coats indoor plumbing. Baker is named in a class action lawsuit against Saint-Gobain and Honeywell,

Over 1,000 people have had their blood tested for PFOA. Emily Marpe of Petersburg, and her two children, are among them. Marpe testified her level of 322 micrograms is higher than some factory workers.

"I'm not the same person I was seven months ago," she said.

Kathy Lingener of Hoosick Falls said she believes the village made a conscious decision to put the economic development above the health of its residents. She called the DOH staff who were dispatched to the village "disappointing."

"They were there with a script to read," she said. "That's not help. That's DOH covering their bases."

As the hearings were underway, DEC and DOH announced it had demanded the EPA reimburse the state for what it has spent if it's not paid by the companies. Zucker and DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos, in a letter to EPA Director Gina McCarthy, said the state has already spent \$25 million and that officials expect those costs to rise above \$75 million.

A "lack of clear direction and... differing direction caused our agencies great hardship in responding to the situation" and "caused great public concern, frustration and anxiety," the letter states.

Zucker testified for nearly two hours and repeatedly cast blame on the EPA. The agency studied PFOA for years before it issued a provisional health advisory of 400 parts per trillion (ppt) in 2009, he said. It was reduced to 70 this year.

"What confused us is that they never mentioned 'don't drink the water' above a certain level, and now they do," Zucker stated.

"It's a preposterous, desperate argument," Rob Allen, a teacher at the school who testified in the late afternoon, said about the DEC and DOH testimony. He testified with a Powerpoint presentation that traced a timeline using emails since 2014 released from information requests, and using photos of his now two-year-old daughter. Allen said that health officials "talked down" the dangers of drinking the water. He called the response time "reprehensible." He also criticized the timing of Gov. Andrew Cuomo's first visit to the village: The Sunday morning after Saint Patrick's Day.

Enck, whose agency issued a letter to the senators, said the EPA does take its time when setting advisories. "But it's not fair to say the EPA caused confusion," she said. And DOH could "easily follow a health advisory changing from 400 to 70 ppt."

And Enck said she was "a little surprised that New York may already be throwing in the towel" in pursuing polluters. She noted the Superfund law requires polluters to pay for cleanup and related costs, not taxpayers.

Elected officials in the affected communities expressed frustration over the dispute between DOH and DEC, and the EPA. Hoosick Town Supervisor Mark Surdham and Hoosick Falls Village Mayor David Borge told senators they were concerned over how municipalities would cover the costs until the companies reimburse them. The municipalities have retained attorneys and communications specialists. Village office staff were given a payout of vacation time earlier this summer after not taking any time off.

Contact Ed Damon at 802-447-7567, ext. 111.

EPA director says state health was not confused about PFOA

August 31, 2016 06:38 PM

WNYT Channel 13 News – Albany

HOOSICK FALLS -- State health commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker put the blame on the EPA at a state senate hearing here on Tuesday. Zucker said his department was following EPA guidelines on PFOA, when it let residents consume contaminated water for more than

a year.

Zucker said a December 2015 EPA press release telling residents to stop drinking the water came out of left field.

"We are sort of confused. They didn't mention don't drink the water before, above a certain level, and they do now," said Dr. Zucker, in front of the senate panel yesterday.

EPA Region II Director Judith Enck says the EPA didn't know residents were drinking water over the 400 ppt level until October 2015, when Rensselaer County Executive Kathy Jimino called looking for money to help with the PFOA.

Enck says not long after she found out, she called state health urging the department to get residents to stop drinking the water. She also penned a November 2015 letter with the same advice. The health department waited until after that press release to tell residents to stop drinking the water.

"There was no confusion at all, and there were lots of conversations," said Enck. She went on to say, "EPA advised the people not to drink the water. This was a disagreement between the department of health and EPA."

The health department was working on getting a filter before the EPA stepped in, but Zucker and his team said the levels over 400 were okay to drink because of a built-in buffer zone.

"They build in this large margin, this buffer. The idea is health effects are not expected to occur at the health advisory levels they set," said Brad Hutton, deputy health commissioner.

Enck says that's not how it works. The advisory was for weeks or months of exposure, not years.

"The majority of samples came back over 600 parts per trillion, and our short term number was 400 parts per trillion. It seemed fairly obvious that the state health department should be informing the public to seek alternate water supply," said Enck.

Zucker said state health had done no independent research on PFOA before telling residents their water wasn't expected to cause health effects.

The thing state health, the DEC, and the EPA can agree on: Each director said they were very proud of the work their agency or department did in Hoosick Falls.

Enck was criticized for not showing up at yesterday's hearing. She says federal agencies don't usually show up at state hearings and she says she won't be attending the next two either.

Cuomo Administration Plays Blame Game Over Upstate Town's Poisoned Water

by Raphael Pope-Sussman

on Aug 31, 2016 2:52 pm

Gothamist

After Governor Andrew Cuomo slew a giant sea creature with his bare hands over the weekend, his administration went fishing for excuses on Tuesday, claiming it is not to blame for the environmental crisis in the upstate town of Hoosick Falls.

State officials defended the administration's response in testimony at a state Senate hearing on the handling of the crisis, which began last November with the revelation that the Hoosick Falls water supply contained dangerous levels of the suspected carcinogen perfluorooctanoic acid, better known as PFOA.

According to a Politico report, Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker blamed the federal Environmental Protection Agency for the crisis in his testimony, complaining that the EPA had confused state officials and unnecessarily freaked out the residents of Hoosick Falls by warning them not to drink the contaminated water.

Regional EPA administrator Judith Enck challenged the state's narrative that its inaction was a result of confusion about the safety of Hoosick Falls' drinking water. According to Enck, Health Department officials told the EPA they were not concerned about PFOA levels that exceeded the EPA's recommended safety standard of 400 parts per trillion because they believed the EPA standard had a built-in margin of safety.

"The state Health Department was not at all confused about what the EPA numbers were, but they were unwilling to alert the public about the problem," Enck told Gothamist. "They were not willing to err on the side of caution."

Zucker and Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Basil Seggos also on Tuesday sent an angry letter to the EPA expressing similar complaints. They demanded that the agency pick up the bill for cleanup and remediation, which the state estimated could rise as high as \$75 million over the next decade.

Enck submitted her own letter to state legislators outlining the EPA's response to the crisis.

Perfluorooctanoic acid is used in a range of consumer products, including certain food containers, textiles like Gore-Tex, and the non-stick coating Teflon. Residents of Hoosick Falls have said exposure to PFOA has led to elevated rates of cancer and thyroid disease in the town. The contamination has been linked to an industrial plant operated by the firm Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics, as well as a Honeywell International plant that is no longer active.

As Politico previously reported, the Health Department knew about potential PFOA contamination in Hoosick Falls as early as 2014, but did not act on this information. Even after the EPA notified the mayor of Hoosick Falls that water in the town's taps was not safe

to drink in November 2015, the Cuomo Administration continued to maintain that residents would not suffer ill health effects from ingesting it. A December 2015 fact sheet issued by the Health Department and the DEC stated, "Health effects are not expected to occur from normal use of the water."

It was only in late January of this year that Cuomo took action, declaring Hoosick Falls a state Superfund site and ordering the Health Department and DEC to conduct thorough testing of the town's water and install filtration systems to remove PFOA from the water supply.

"I do believe our citizens were advised incorrectly to consume water that was unsafe for at least for 12 months, local doctor Marcus Martinez told Politico.

The Department of Health declined Gothamist's request for comment.

State sampling river to assess PFOA source in Washington County by

MICHAEL GOOT mgoot@poststar.com

Aug 31, 2016

Post Star

Photo: The Hoosic River is seen earlier this month. Representatives from the state Department of Environmental Conservation have been taking samples to see if the contaminant PFOA is present and could be the source of the chemical showing up in wells in the White Creek area.

WHITE CREEK — The state Department of Environmental Conservation is sampling the Hoosic River and its tributaries to assess how PFOA contamination may have spread to Washington County.

DEC officials on Aug. 25 collected samples from the Eagle Bridge area of the river and its tributaries, including the Walloomsac River, according to spokesman Sean Mahar.

“DEC will collect an additional 13 samples once the river system returns to low flow conditions,” Mahar said in an email.

The initial results are expected in mid-September, Mahar added.

Environmental officials are trying to determine the source of PFOA, a chemical known as perfluorooctanoic acid, which was used in nonstick coating.

The chemical has been found in Hoosick Falls and Petersburg, and the state in May reached a settlement with the Saint-Gobain and Honeywell companies to clean up the contamination found in the Hoosick Falls area and pay for the cost. PFOA also has been found in White Creek and Cambridge.

Concentration levels above the Environmental Protection Agency’s advisory limit of 70 parts per trillion were found in 27 of the 126 well samples in southern Washington County.

The state DEC has installed point-of-entry-treatment systems, which used a granular-activated carbon to remove the PFOA. Twenty-six were installed in White Creek and two in Cambridge.

Prolonged exposure to the chemical could result in risk of cancer, birth defects or problems with the liver, immune system and thyroid, according to the EPA.

White Creek is holding a meeting to discuss the PFOA issue. It is tentatively scheduled for 6 p.m. Sept. 14 at Cambridge Central School.

Officials do not know how the contamination spread to Washington County. Some residents have cited the Hoosic River, which flooded a few years ago in the Eagle Bridge section of White Creek.

Some of the homes where wells tested positive for PFOA were along River and Turnpike roads, where there was flooding.

In addition to the river, state officials are also looking at landfills as a potential source. DEC this week identified the nearby Hoosick Falls landfill site as a potential state Superfund location.

The state's preliminary investigation has found that the landfill site, and municipal landfills in the towns of Petersburg and Berlin, may contain PFOA.

Monitoring wells at the Hoosick Falls landfill site found PFOA concentrations of up to 21,000 parts per trillion, according to a news release.

Further study will determine if there is evidence of hazardous materials.

Designation as a Superfund site allows the state to implement expedited remediation and get the responsible parties to pay for the cleanup costs.

The Hoosick Falls landfill was owned by the village and operated from the mid-1930s until it stopped accepting waste in 1993 and closed the following year, according to the state.

DEC is asking residents with concerns about illegal dumping to call 402-9676.

The agency continues to take requests for private well sampling and installation of water filtration systems. Residents can call the Hoosick Falls Water Hotline at 1-800-801-8092.

Groundwater Contamination Tests Begin at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst

Aug 31, 2016

The Sandpaper.net

A company hired by the U.S. Department of Defense has begun testing groundwater at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst to assess potential perfluorinated compound contamination. “In response to the Environmental Protection Agency’s provisional health advisory for two forms of perfluorinated compounds (PFOS/PFOA), the Air Force has been working to identify all sites on installations where those PFCs may have been released as part of a firefighting effort or training scenario,” Air Force Civil Engineer Center Public Affairs explained.

“PFCs are a component of aqueous film-forming foam, a firefighting foam that has been used by the Air Force and other DoD components to protect people and property from fuel-based fires. As part of a comprehensive assessment process, the Air Force determined PFC-containing firefighting foam may have been released at approximately 200 installations (active, Reserve, Air National Guard and closed).”

The Air Force Civil Engineer Center is conducting sampling at each of those installations to determine whether a release has occurred and if PFCs are present in the groundwater, and, additionally, to ascertain the possibility that the contaminant has moved offsite and reached drinking water sources.

According to the New Jersey Sierra Club, PFOA has been linked to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in children, as per a report published by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. “The incidence of ADHD in children is rising and so is the amount of PFOA in the water supply,” the organization noted.

If a drinking water source is identified as possibly contaminated, it will be tested, and, as

the AFCEC Public Affairs states, “If the test confirms levels above the EPA’s PHA, we take immediate action to ensure people have water to drink that is not above the PHA level and begin action to address the contamination sources. All sites with a suspected PFC release will be sampled.”

Thirty bases have been tested to date, and four were found to have drinking water sources with PFC levels above the EPA PHA level, in Alaska, New Hampshire, New York and Pennsylvania. In those cases, the Air Force responded to the effect on drinking water with a combination of filtration, bottled water and other alternate water sources, while also working to identify and implement a long-term solution.

The Air Force now limits use of the firefighting foam to emergency responses only, and in those cases immediate action is taken to ensure containment. According to AFCEC Public Affairs, “The Air Force is committed to eliminating firefighting foam containing either PFOS or PFOA from its inventory, and is finalizing a phased plan to replace existing firefighting foam inventories with recently approved PFOS/PFOA-free alternatives that still provide adequate fire protection for critical assets and infrastructure. These alternatives do contain PFCs but do not contain the two addressed by the EPA advisory.”

For more information, contact AFCEC Public Affairs at 866-725-7617 or afcec.pa@us.af.mil. —J.K.-H.

Creating final rules on PFOA in Vermont

By Alexei Rubenstein

Updated: Aug 31, 2016 6:50 PM EDT

WCAX.com

MONTPELIER, Vt. -

Vermont environmental officials are moving forward to create final rules enforcing PFOA, the chemical that has contaminated drinking water across the region.

At a public hearing in Montpelier Wednesday, officials said when the final rule is adopted later this fall, it will make official the interim regulations that limit PFOA to 20 parts per trillion. That's lower than levels set by neighboring states and the Environmental Protection Agency. The chemical has been linked to an increased risk for cancer, thyroid disease and other illnesses. State officials say the lower thresholds were set to protect children.

Environmental groups say they support Vermont's efforts.

"The state of Vermont has an obligation to protect all residents of the state-- that includes the youngest and most vulnerable population, such as infants and children. And so the state of Vermont took those considerations into account when coming up with the drinking water standards and we think that having these strong standards of 20 parts per trillion is the right way to go," said Shaina Kasper of the Toxics Action Center.

Saint-Gobain, the company responsible for the Chemfab property in Bennington, lost a case in state court last week trying to throw out the more stringent groundwater enforcement standards, saying the state lacked the data to support it.

The deadline for comments on the new rules is Sept. 9.

Panel answers questions on health effects of Horsham water contamination

By Dan Sokil

Published: Wednesday, August 31, 2016

21th Century Media (Alabama)

HORSHAM >> Several hundred residents of Horsham and the surrounding area now know a little more about the long-term health effects of contaminated groundwater in that area — and how much the experts still don't know.

Even a relatively simple question, like whether the local water is safe for pregnant women or infants, can have a complicated answer.

“If the water is at the lifetime health advisory level or less, than it’s safe. We feel that people can use it,” said Karl Markiewicz, a senior toxicologist with the Center for Disease Control’s Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry’s Philadelphia office.

“That standard was developed to protect the most sensitive sector — in this case, it’s an infant breastfeeding — so the short answer is ‘yes,’” he said.

Markiewicz was among a panel of experts from state and federal agencies who answered questions during a public townhall, in one-on-one sessions with residents and in a public question-and-answer discussion Monday night at Hatboro-Horsham High School.

Karen Johnson, chief of groundwater enforcement for the federal Environmental Protection Agency’s Region 3, described a long list of household products that have been used since the 1950s and contain PFOA (perfluorooctanoic acid) and PFOS (perfluorooctanesulfonic acid), both linked to firefighting foams used at the former Willow Grove and Warminster bases and detected in groundwater now.

“PFOS and PFOA are both eight-carbon chains, and they’ve been used for many products that have saved time for us. They’re used to resist stains, grease, as water repellant,” Johnson said, showing a list of former and current uses.

PFOAs have long been used in cooking surfaces such as Teflon, toothpastes, shampoos, cosmetics, food containers, paints and cleaning products, while PFOS has been used in photo development, semiconductors, stain repellents — and both can be found in flame repellents, including the firefighting foams used at the bases until 2010. Every five years, EPA promulgates a new list of chemicals to regulate and at what level to do so, and that process led to a new health advisory level being issued by EPA earlier this year, from the previous 400 parts per trillion of combined PFOA and PFOS to a new standard of 70 parts per trillion.

“The health advisory is currently based at 20 percent of our consumption being from drinking water. The other 80 percent of these, PFOS and PFOA, is from some of the other ingestions: toothpaste, cosmetics, dust — that really can’t be addressed,” she said.

Studies have shown that PFOA and PFOS are only slowly absorbed through skin contact and more quickly by ingestion, according to Johnson and Markiewicz. A resident asked whether private wells over the 70 PPT advisory level are safe to use for gardening, watering the lawn or filling a swimming pool, and the answers vary.

“The short answer is ‘yes’ for the lawn — it doesn’t really stay in the surface soil; it wants to move down to the groundwater. For gardens, there is very, very little plant intake,” Markiewicz said.

Dermal absorption — through the skin — while swimming should be minimal, and swallowing a small amount while swimming may also not be harmful, even to children, he said.

“It’s not as if they’re drinking glasses full of it, but they may drink a mouthful or two, and that’s going to be a low amount. So what we’re telling folks is that you can use it for those purposes,” he said.

Sharon Watkins, director of the Pennsylvania Department of Health’s Bureau of Epidemiology, described the results found by analysing data on cancer cases from 1985 through 2013 (the last year data is available) in the Warminster, Warrington and Horsham ZIP codes.

“This cancer analysis provides, I would say, a mixed picture. We found both increases and we found decreases for the concerns of potential interest in this area, as opposed to statewide rates,” she said.

Kidney and liver cancer occurrences were within expected ranges for all age groups. Rates of bladder cancer were slightly higher in the Warminster zip code (18974) from 2005 to 2013, but were lower than the expected level for the Warrington zip code (18976) in the 1985-'94 period and at the expected levels from 1995 to 2004. Rates of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma did show occasional increases, but at different times for different age groups, the data did not show any distinct trends, she said.

"We didn't see, for both males and females, in all three periods, elevation for any of the cancers, so that makes it a little more difficult to say 'Aha!' in this kind of analysis," said Watkins.

"But, we are very cognizant that we did identify a few statistically increased results for the cancers of potential interest," she said, naming testicular cancer and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma as cancers where rates increased enough to warrant further study.

What is the best way for residents to filter or purify their own water? Johnson said the EPA does not certify devices for their effectiveness in removing PFOA or PFOS, and any lab that would test that filtration must be clean and have no Teflon or other potential contamination sources.

"It's on the horizon, but it's not available at this time," she said.

If soil is excavated from the Horsham base as part of a redevelopment project, could the PFOS and PFOA get into the air? Dawn Ioven, an EPA toxicologist with the Philadelphia regional office, said PFOA and PFOS typically move through soil into groundwater relatively quickly, and anyone doing the excavating would likely suppress that dust.

"If we do find PFCs in soil, and that soil has to be excavated. There would also be measures to ensure that any contamination in that soil would not become airborne, and that would eliminate the inhalation pathway," she said.

Could pets be impacted by PFOA or PFOS? Few studies have been done on animals that

typically are house pets, Markiewicz said, and the only study he's seen on dogs looked at how the chemicals passed through their bodies, not the health effects. Studies on mice or rats may be comparable to pet guinea pigs or other animals of the same size, but little information is available for larger pets.

"That question comes up a lot, and we really don't have an answer, and there aren't any standards we use for comparisons for farm animals or pets," he said.

Are the air bases the only sources of PFOA and PFOS contamination? No, Johnson said, because they're used frequently in the household cleaning products and cosmetics, although some manufacturers are starting to phase them out.

"We have all used these products. We flush them down the drains, they go into our sewers, into our wastewater systems. We really don't have the expectation that we will get to zero" levels of PFOA or PFOS, she said.

"What we have are those hot spots," like the two bases, "and those areas are pretty well-defined, but given the values that we're finding across the world, you basically have this in our soil and water worldwide."

Horsham resident state Rep. Todd Stephens, R-151, asked why the EPA said in February and October 2015 that infants should not ingest water with any levels of PFCs before issuing the long-term health advisory level in May 2016 of 70 parts per trillion.

"Why did EPA allow water that it said was not allowed for infants to flow out of the faucets in our homes?" Stephens said.

Rick Rogers, associate director of the EPA's State Programs Branch for the Mid-Atlantic region, said that warning was issued out of "an abundance of caution" because final studies were still underway at that time on the impact of PFOA and PFOS on infants.

“At the time, we couldn’t say for sure what the level should be for infants. Now we know, it’s 70 [parts per trillion], so we’re saying, ‘At 70 or below is OK for infants.’ At the time, our knowledge was a little bit not-settled in that department,” he said.

State Rep. Madeleine Dean, D-153, said she understood the “feeling of unease” her constituents have expressed because so much remains unknown about the long-term effects of exposure to PFOA and PFOS.

“I think that there’s a lot of information known, and there’s probably even more information that’s not known,” Dean said.

U.S. Rep. Brendan Boyle, D-13, said he was glad to work with fellow Congressmen Mike Fitzpatrick and Patrick Meehan to ensure federal attention to the local residents who live in all three of their districts.

“I wish we didn’t have this issue to deal with, but at no point has our different party affiliations come up since we’ve been working on this,” he said.

“We’ve had more conversations, the three of us, on the House floor about this issue than all the other issues combined, so it is a quite serious one and something we’ve been dealing with on a bipartisan basis, and we’ll continue to do so,” Boyle said.

All presentations from the panel will be posted on Horsham’s website, Horsham.org, according to Township Manager Bill Walker, and a frequently asked question (and answer) list will be developed based on feedback from the experts. For more information, visit Horsham.org or email water@horsham.org for updates.

\$5 million settlement reached with Daikin in federal water lawsuit

By Will Robinson-Smith wrobinson-smith@waaytv.com

WAAY Channel 31 News - Alabama

Residents who receive drinking water through the West Morgan-East Lawrence Water Authority have some good news Thursday morning.

A partial settlement of \$5 million was reached with Daikin in the federal lawsuit filed against Daikin, 3M and Dyneon on behalf of WMEL and its customers.

Attorneys said Thursday that the settlement money will cover the costs of the Granular Activated Carbon (GAC) filtration system that is currently being installed to treat the WMEL water for the next three to four years.

Jeff Friedman, an attorney representing WMEL, said the settlement is an important step forward in improving the lives of those affected.

"We set out from day one to make sure that the cost of providing clean water was put on the shoulders of the polluters and not the public," Friedman said.

The system, which started installation earlier this month, is designed to filter out the PFOS and PFOA chemicals, which are the subject of the Environmental Protection Agency drinking water advisory issued in May.

Attorneys said that planned completion of the filtration system by the end of September is still on schedule.

They add that \$3.9 million of the settlement will be put directly toward the cost of the system itself. \$450,000 will be divided among individual customers as a reimbursement of their water bills for the duration after the EPA guidelines were put in place and before the water was blended with that of Decatur Utilities. The remaining funds will go toward court

required notices to customers, costs, expenses and attorneys' fees.

Those around the Town of Trinity who spoke with WAAY 31 Thursday afternoon said they were happy to see they will be getting some money back as a result of this.

"I'll be glad when it's all settled because we have two little boys and we'll probably one day have more kids and I don't want nothing to happen to kids by no means. That's just a bad thing to go through," resident Bubba Borden said.

"It was such a shock, or surprise, you know, to see that Daikin was doing that for us," 44-year resident Daisee Turner said.

As part of the settlement, Daikin has denied any wrongdoing. Attorneys said that a similar discussion may also happen with 3M and Dyneon.

In response to the settlement, Daikin provided the following statement:

"We are pleased to have reached an agreement with WMEL and the other parties. We believe this is the result of our efforts to work cooperatively with our local, state and federal officials to help address the situation. We believe the settlement is in the best interests of the community since it resolves the uncertainty of litigation, provides funding for a water treatment system and reimburses citizens for past water bills."

Attorneys also stress that this settlement does not affect claims individuals may have for their sickness, illness or personal injury.

In addition, WMEL attorney Carl Cole said that they are also creating a fund for \$20,000 to use as emergency funds to purchase bottled water in Lawrence and Morgan Counties should

something like this happens again.

MERI lecture to focus on toxic Teflon chemicals in U.S. drinking water

(Originally published in Castine Patriot, September 1, 2016 and Island Ad-Vantages, September 1, 2016 and The Weekly Packet, September 1, 2016)

Penobscot Bay Press (Maine)

A new Harvard study shows how the drinking water of six million Americans, and likely many more, is contaminated with highly fluorinated chemicals associated with serious health problems, according to a news release.

The chemicals, known as “PFCs,” are used as stain and water repellents in everyday products such as non-stick cookware and fast food wrapping. Two PFCs, PFOA, the key ingredient in DuPont’s Teflon, and PFOS, 3M’s Scotchguard chemical, are also used in firefighting foams at military sites and airports and have caused contamination of groundwater across the country.

Award-winning investigative reporter Sharon Lerner, who writes about chemicals, health and environment for The Intercept, was one of the first journalists to investigate how these chemicals wound up in drinking water and warn the public about the health hazards they pose to communities. The Intercept guarantees editorial independence in the pursuit of stories their reporters believe in.

Lerner’s presentation, “PFOA: How It Got Into U.S. Drinking Water and Waterways Around The World,” is part of this year’s lecture series Driving Change To Save the Planet, at the Marine & Environmental Research Institute on Wednesday, September 7. These lectures are free and open to the public at the MERI Center For Environmental Studies, 55 Main Street in Blue Hill. The 6 p.m. talk is preceded by a reception for the speaker at 5.30 p.m. As seating is limited, please arrive early. For more information, call 374-2135 or email info@meriresearch.org.

Also, this week, Dr. Shaw is leading a focus group of international scientists over two days

to address the global problem of PFC contamination at the Dioxin 2016 Symposium in Italy (dioxin2016.org). Her Summary of new findings will be available on the MERI website (meriresearch.org).

Cairns firefighters want blood tests following toxic chemical exposure

Jim Campbell,

September 1, 2016 3:00pm

The Cairns Post (Australia)

CAIRNS firefighters are pushing for medical checks to determine if they are carrying dangerous levels of chemicals used in a toxic firefighting foam.

Several current and former firefighters have spoken out following revelations in the Cairns Post this week about the frequent and heavy use of toxic aqueous film forming foams (AFFF) containing the chemicals perfluoro-octane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) at Cairns fire station in Westcourt.

Officers detailed how large quantities of the expired foam were regularly given to Cairns fire station for use in training by personnel at HMAS Cairns.

They said the foam was used on-site at the station and that it was left to soak into the ground or wash down suburban drains.

A Queensland Fire and Emergency Service spokeswoman said with the “rare use of foams containing PFOS and PFOA” and “strict procedures relating to the use of personal protective equipment, it is unlikely QFES firefighters will have experienced any significant exposure”.

But that claim was rubbished by former firefighter Peter Campion, who served at Cairns

from 1999 to 2002.

“I can tell you quite clearly that firefighters using foam in the back yard at Cairns fire station were usually dressed in normal work clothes with the addition of helmets and gloves,” Mr Campion said.

“Full personal protective equipment was most definitely not used in training.”

United Firefighting Union’s Cairns branch secretary Jack Emeleus said he was contacted by several officers this week who said the QFES statement was “completely false” and that there was “no doubt” exposure had happened. National Toxics Network chemical expert Dr Mariann Lloyd-Smith, who has researched PFOS and PFOA contaminations across Australia, urged firefighters who worked at Cairns fire station before 2003 to seek medical testing.

Dr Lloyd-Smith also said given the reports from officers it was “almost certain” the station and potentially surrounding properties would have high levels of the chemicals PFOS and PFOA, which overseas studies had linked to thyroid disease, immune disorders, reduced fertility and testicular and kidney cancers.

QFES said it was working with the UFU to test a number of fire stations across the state, including Cairns.

Mr Emeleus said he had written to the QFES Assistant Commissioner this week to request an option for officers to have blood and medical tests.
